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ABSTRACT

The conference was attended by more than 50 outdoor/environmental educators from the New York City school system and representatives from city and state agencies and the private sector. Focus was on how to make outdoor/environmental programs available to all children in the New York City schools. The bulk of the conference was devoted to the deliberations of six working task forces. These task forces dealt with curriculum development, teacher training, facilities, funding, interagency and community-based programs, and administration. This report, derived from general-session proceedings and the reports of the six task forces, presents the participants' recommendations. Among these are that: a permanent steering committee on outdoor/environmental education, representative of all interested agencies, should be established; environmental concepts should be integrated into the curriculum in as many of the more traditional subject areas; school-yards might be utilized as "campsites" with school showers, toilets, and locker rooms left open for supervised use by overnight campers; and a central clearinghouse on outdoor/environmental education should be created. (NQ)

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THE MOHONK CONFERENCE ON OUTDOOR EDUCATION FOR NEW YORK CITY

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A Report of
The Citywide Conference
on
Outdoor Education
Environmental Education
School Camping

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A Report of
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OCTOBER 30, 31, NOVEMBER 1, 1974
THE MOHONK MOUNTAIN
CONFERENCE CENTER
NEW PALTZ, N.Y. 12561

PREFACE

"You had to *be* there!" Each of the participants in the Mohonk Conference returned to the city anxious to share their experience with friends and colleagues. Their words of description of the facts of the experience as well as of their intellectual and emotional reaction to that experience were comprehensive in coverage, profound in content and understanding, and rhapsodic in expression. Yet, each claimed to be insufficiently articulate to bring to the listener all the meaning that the participant wanted to convey. "You had to *be* there!"

This report on the Mohonk Conference is offered to those who couldn't be there as the best available way for sharing that which, at the deepest level, is unsharable. It is hoped that through such sharing, non participants can gain sufficient knowledge and insight to want to pursue the matter further to the point of searching out similar experiences which can impact on their work with young people. It is offered, too, to conference participants as one way to recall the experience and to assist them in continuing to use that experience to illuminate their life and work.

The conference carried many powerful messages. It spoke to the environmental imperative that faces us. It suggested strongly the responsibility we have to create and use an educational climate in which city-bred children and youth can come to understand the delicate relationships which exist between the man-made environment in which they spend a large part of their lives and the natural environment which ultimately sustains them. It illustrated how such allied movements as outdoor education, school camping, experiential science, and environmental education converge on common and educationally sound objectives. It demonstrated the power of the interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning. It provided a reality framework for such truisms as the following ones limned in *Design for Change*, a recent Board of Education publication:

– Through cooperative effort, problems can be addressed effectively and with the hope of success;

– Students learn not only in school but elsewhere and what is learned elsewhere is worth "counting" in school;

– Education is not bound by the strictures of a particular locus, such as a school; nor by a particular block of time, such as the nine-to-three period of the day or the September-through-June part of the year; nor by a particular segment of a total life span, such as encompasses ages five to twenty-one;

– Education to be comprehensive, therefore, requires "linkages" between within-school learnings and outside-of-school learning opportunities.

All of that and more was brought into focus by the Mohonk Conference. But all of that, at present, is potential rather than actuality for most of our city's school children. The molding of various excellent but disparate and often fragmentary programs into a planned, comprehensive, no-gaps, coordinated city-wide effort is the challenge that lies ahead. It is that challenge that the Mohonk conferees went after with a will. Their concern, their wisdom, their diligence, their almost evangelical zeal, their personal and professional commitment were evident throughout the conference. Consequently, their recommendations for action carry a special kind of validity.

If the Mohonk Conference represents the beginning of a process by which these recommendations become translated into general practice – and every reader of this report can push that process forward – then the conference will have been one of the most significant ever undertaken in the long and distinguished history of New York City public education. The result will be generations of New York City school children whose education has been enriched beyond measure.

It is with profound hope for that consequence that I extend warm congratulations to all who contributed to the Mohonk effort – to the staff of the agencies and institutions represented for their hard work; to the New York Community Trust and to the Division of Educational Planning and Support's Bureau of Health and Physical Education and Learning Cooperative for their tri-partite sponsorship; and to Dr. Eugene Ezersky for his extraordinary leadership and direction.

EDYTHE J. GAINES
Executive Director,
Division of Educational
Planning and Support

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FOREWORD

Behind this report and the conference at which it was generated lie a series of basic – and critical – convictions:

- We live in a finite and fragile world.
- If that world is to survive, its inhabitants must be educated to the need to conserve its resources and maintain the delicate ecological balances that sustain it.
- That the educational process should start at the earliest possible age.
- The outdoors – the environment itself rather than the formal classroom – offers the best opportunities to acquire the wide range of information that comprises environmental knowledge.
- Outdoor learning is "action" learning and can be superior, in terms of student achievement and retention of knowledge, to the passive experiences in the classroom.
- In studying environmental questions in the environment itself, students will employ the basic skills of reading, communication, and computation, enhancing their abilities in these areas.
- Effective programs in outdoor/environmental education not only can be developed in the New York City public schools but are urgently needed for both the student body and the community at large.
- The resources of not only the city's schools but of the full range of governmental, cultural, scientific, industrial and commercial institutions can be deployed to initiate and support such programs.

Acting on these convictions, the New York City Board of Education's Bureau for Health and Physical Education, with the approval and assistance of its parent agency, the Division of Educational Planning and Support, convened a three-day conference on outdoor education, school camping, and environmental education October 30 - November 1, 1974, at the Mohonk Mountain Conference Center in New Paltz, New York.

Planned and organized by Dr. Eugene Ezersky, coordinator of Outdoor Education, School Camping, and Environmental Education for the Bureau for Health and Physical Education, the conference was funded by the New York Community Trust through a grant to The Learning Cooperative of the Board of Education. The more than 50 participants represented not only outdoor/environmental educators from the city's school system but representatives of appropriate city and state agencies and the private sector.

The conference included a limited number of general sessions devoted to the state of the art in outdoor/environmental education. But the bulk of the conferees' time was devoted to the deliberations of six working task forces. Each of the six grappled with a critical issue to be resolved if outdoor/environmental studies were to become an integral part of the lives of the city's students:

- Curriculum development.
- Teacher training.
- Facilities.
- Funding.
- Inter-agency and community-based programs.
- Administration.

Because the task-force deliberations necessarily involved overlap and duplication of ideas, publication of full conference proceedings was ruled out. Instead, the following is a "sense-of-the-conference" report derived from general-session proceedings, the reports of the six task forces, and the observations of the author, who circulated among the task forces during their three days of deliberations.

The resulting product, it is hoped, will serve to help encourage and guide the introduction and strengthening of outdoor/environmental programs throughout the New York City School system. At the same time, it should prove useful to communities across the nation as they recognize and act on the need to make the environment and the outdoors central elements in the educational process.

James J. Morisseau
New York, December 1974

THE PROBLEM IS "HOW"

The question at the Mohonk Mountain Conference was not whether outdoor/environmental programs should be made available to all children in the New York City schools. The question was how? Not once during the three-day session was a question raised over the value – educational, social, recreational – of outdoor education, school camping, or environmental education.

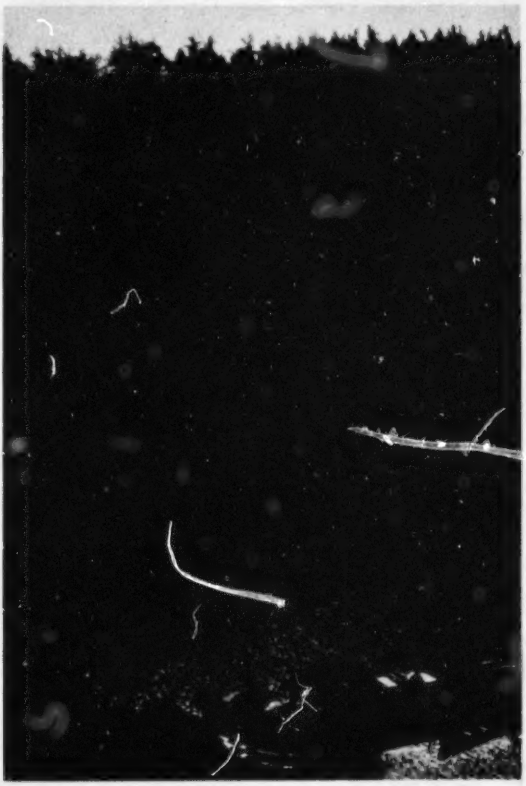
The fact was that all of the 50-odd participants knew that such programs not only were valuable and viable and that they could work in the context of the New York City schools, provided that value could be demonstrated to others and the resources found to support them. As a highly visible example, the participants could point to early successes in efforts to provide school camping for New York public school pupils and their teachers.

A recent chapter of the school camping story in New York dates back to 1968, when Harold B. Gores, president of Educational Facilities Laboratories, a Ford Foundation sponsored agency which was established to help schools and colleges with their physical problems, asked Dr. Eugene Ezersky (who was to become the organizer of the Mohonk Mountain Conference) to conduct a study on the feasibility of school camping for New York City. The resulting report, entitled *City to Country: Outdoor Education for New York City*, generated wide interest and led eventually to the introduction of camping programs in serveral districts in the city.

Perhaps most notable of them is Manhattan's District 2, where school camping programs have been in operation for at least six years and where the community and the local school board feel school camping deserves the support of tax-levy funds and have acted accordingly. In 1973-'74, for example, 40 classes were sent to camp at a total cost of $53,000. The local board allocated $45,000 of the total; the remaining $8,000 was underwritten by the Lenox Hill Neighborhood House.

That programs like District 2's have educational value was attested to in a New York Times feature article December 7, 1974. And, that involved educators and communities are coming to recognize that value, is demonstrated by District 2's willingness to devote hard-to-come-by public funds to school camping.

Much the same can be said about other programs in environmental and outdoor education discussed at the Monhonk Mountain Conference. They are not frills. They have much to contribute, not only to the students' knowledge of the environment and related subjects, but to their grasp of such fundamental skills as reading and mathematics. The problem, then, is not whether they should be made widely available, but how?



As a result, the Mohonk conferees spent much of their time identifying the obstacles to widespread adoption of such programs in the city (and, by inference, in other commu-

nities) and exploring ways to overcome those obstacles. It was recognized, for example, that teacher resistance or reluctance to participate in new programs in an unfamiliar (non-classroom) setting was a major barrier.

Accordingly, much attention was devoted to ways and means of encouraging teachers to participate in outdoor/environmental programs and, once persuaded, providing them with the necessary training to handle environmental subject matter and outdoor learning situations.

Another and readily identifiable barrier was money. Outdoor/environmental programs inevitably involve the allocation of additional funds over and above normal school budgets or, at the very least, reallocation of financial resources. Addressing the problem, the conferees explored ways to secure public acceptance of outdoor/environmental programs and a willingness to commit public funds to their support. And ways were sought to establish linkages with potential funding agencies at all levels of government and in the private sector.

In contrast to the financial situation, the conferees concluded early in their deliberations that there was no shortage of facilities in and around the city to accommodate outdoor programs. They pointed to the city, state, and federal park systems; museums and scientific institutions; the city's waterfront and waterways; sewage treatment and garbage disposal facilities; hundreds of private and agency-supported campsites in the region, and utility plants and other facilities operated by private enterprise. They went so far as to conclude that the schoolhouse offered an obvious and effective facility for the study of such environmental questions as energy use, water supply, waste disposal, and traffic patterns.

The problem, then, was not availability of facilities but development of a system by which existing facilities could be identified, their existence made known to potential users, and scheduled for maximum utilization. At the same time, consideration was given to the renovation of existing school spaces to better accommodate environmental programs.

As with facilities, the conference found there was no shortage of curriculum materials for outdoor/environmental programs. Again, it was a matter not of finding or creating new materials but of establishing systems by which existing materials could be identified and information about them disseminated to all potential users. At the same time, it became obvious that outdoor/environmental studies were interdisciplinary in nature and that the users of materials had to be helped to understand that reality.

The list of conference participants will indicate that outdoor/environmental programs are not the sole province of the school system. Such diverse agencies as the city's Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs Administration, the State Park Commission, the National Park Service, the Fresh Air Fund, the American Museum of Natural History, the Environmental Protection Administration, and the U.S. Forest Service among many others, are active in the field. Here, the problem was identified as one of coordination. How could the programs and activities of all involved agencies be organized to provide opportunities for the greatest number of students while avoiding overlapping and duplication of programs? And how could agency resources be employed to help communities develop their own, locally based programs?

Administration was identified as still another problem. Outdoor/environmental programs mean moving out of the administratively comfortable environment of the schoolhouse and imposing new and different problems in scheduling, transportation, logistics, safety, and discipline. Administrators at every level, from Board of Education headquarters, to community school district offices, to principals and teachers in individual schools, to camp administrators, to officials of public and private agencies, al would have to be helped to understand and deal with this new set of problems.

It must be stressed that the Mohonk Conference in reality dealt with only one broad topic. While the conference title specified "outdoor education, school camping, and en-

vironmental education," the conferees almost at the outset concluded that all three program types were interrelated and that, to discuss them as separate entities would be to ignore that reality and very likely be self-defeating.

Finally the conferees were faced with the reality of New York City's budgetary crisis which, coupled with the relatively low priority traditionally accorded outdoor/environmental programs by educational administrators hard pressed to decide among many worthwhile programs, seemed to mitigate against any early move toward widespread adoption of these kinds of programs in the city schools.

On the other hand, the fiscal crisis cannot last forever. And, based on a recent development in Albany, there was hope that administrators would adopt a new attitude toward education in the outdoors. Amendments to the State Education Commissioner's regulations, effective August 1, 1974, for the first time specifically required that all schools in the state, public and private, shall offer programs providing "outdoor living skills" for their pupils.

This, then, was the context, the set of issues facing the conferees as they broke up into six task forces (see Foreword) and got down to the hard work of coming up with answers. And work hard they did, many sessions running overtime and some late into the night. The atmosphere was one of total commitment to the effort, even of excitement. It was, according to Mrs. Joan Rosner,

consultant in environmental education for Community School District 30 and a planner of the conference, "the most extraordinary conference I ever attended . . . a study in participatory democracy. I've never seen anything done in such a shared way."

Time – the conference lasted the equivalent of two full days – did not permit the task forces to come up with all of the answers. Nor, given the phenomenon of rapid change in this as in all areas of education, is it likely that all the answers are to be had. But, in the view of Gene Ezersky, the conferees had made a major contribution . . . "a generation of children will have greatly benefited."

"If I do nothing else in education," he concluded, "I am content with the fact that we have helped to move an important aspect of education into the mainstream of city life."

OUTDOOR EDUCATION: THE MOHONK GUIDELINES

As indicated earlier, the Mohonk Conference did not – indeed could not have been expected to – produce answers to all of the problems confronting those hoping to promote widespread adoption of outdoor/environmental programs in the schools. But the working task forces dealt with many of the major issues and emerged with a series of recommendations that, taken together, amount to a major step in that direction. It is to those recommendations that the balance of this report is devoted.

Creating A Network

Perhaps the most critical proposal to emerge from the Mohonk Conference came from no single task force but, in one form or another, from all six. It reflects a virtually unanimous feeling among the conferees that some sort of permanent machinery is needed to promote and facilitate adoption of outdoor/environmental programs in the New York City schools.

In the first place, there was a widely held feeling that a permanent steering committee on outdoor/environmental education, representa-

tive of all interested agencies, should be established. The committee, at periodic meetings, would work to convince the general public and their elected representatives of the need for outdoor/environmental programs and the desirability of supporting them financially. At the same time, the committee would promote inter-agency cooperation, assist in the development of community-based programs, and encourage new and innovative approaches in the field.

The conferees also felt a critical need for a central clearinghouse on outdoor/environmental education. The clearinghouse, which most felt should be based in the offices of the Bureau for Health and Physical Education, would collect, maintain, and disseminate information on agency programs, funding sources, curriculum, and available facilities. It would, in effect, serve as a "hot line" for schools and communities needing help in introducing or strengthening outdoor/environmental programs.

TASK FORCE REPORTS

Curriculum Development

The curriculum development task force started its work with an attempt to develop its own curriculum. But early in its deliberations it became apparent to the task force that much excellent curricular material already was available. It was decided that it would be more productive to develop a series of recommendations that would form the basis for creation of a permanent curriculum development task force and a framework within which that task force could operate.

The recommendations were wide-ranging. The task force made the point that outdoor/environmental curriculum should be "based on the concept that all things, living and non-living, are interrelated." It then went on to suggest the possibility that the problem was more complicated than one of developing curricula for outdoor or environmental programs. Environmental concepts, they insisted, should be integrated into the curriculum in many if not all of the more traditional subject areas and in new curriculum areas as they are developed.

The task force evinced great concern with people as resources in the development and use of curriculum. The recommendations include, for example, one that calls for the curriculum to include data on "utilizing human resources." It suggested the possibility of "lend-lease" programs, under which teachers, students, and even specialists from the community could be borrowed from other schools or the colleges to conduct special programs.

Similarly, the task force insisted that curriculum development programs must provide for the training of teachers, community residents, and the school administration to insure that the resulting programs will be effective. (In some existing school reform programs, curriculum development is regarded as an integral part of teacher training and is treated as such.) And it was recommended that whatever curriculum is developed should be usable by non-specialists (such as community resource people) and flexible enough "to allow a teacher to utilize his or her particular strengths."

The curriculum development process, the task force argued, should be a continuous, open-ended one. At one end, it should involve creation of a conceptual framework for an overall outdoor/environmental curriculum running from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. At the other, a specific curriculum should be developed for each grade level.

The recommendations envisioned the curriculum development process occurring both at the central Board of Education and at the community school district level. The central board was urged to go beyond its own staff and utilize the talents available in local school districts and in the community in developing its curricular materials. Community school districts were urged both to develop curriculum tailored to their specific needs and to "share with and cooperate with other districts in the development and implementation of . . . curricula."

If possible, the task force recommended that the cost of developing, printing, and disseminating curricular materials should be borne by the central Board of Education and that such materials be distributed at no cost to the community districts.

Outdoor/environmental curriculums, the task force urged, should suggest a variety of methodologies for their implementation. And, to test the effectiveness of both the curriculum and the methodologies, it was urged that research be undertaken to develop effective methods for evaluation.

The recommendations also concerned themselves with the availability of curriculum resources. The task force urged, for example, that a resource center be established and a resource person identified in each community school district. And it called for creation of a central data bank of materials on outdoor/environmental curricula.

But perhaps the most intriguing of the task force's recommendations had to do with content. It suggested that curriculums for environmental education should do more than create an understanding and awareness of environmental matters and issues. They should, the task force said, "incorporate understanding of the effects of the political, economic, and social factors (involved in) rational decision-making leading to action" (on environmental issues).

Professional Training and Preparation

Task Force Number Two started out in life as the "teacher training task force." But, acting on the conclusion that "training" would have to include more than teachers if outdoor/environmental programs are to be effectively implemented, its members soon adopted a new designation – Environmental Education Training Task Force.

The need for such training, the task force concluded, is posed by the fact that outdoor/environmental education is a highly diverse field, requiring a broad background in teachers and others involved. It is a field that is both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, that is changing rapidly, that requires new and less-structured teaching methods, that calls for adaptation of existing curriculum along with implementation of new curriculum, and that carries the school into the community and the community into the school.

The message, the task force decided, must be transmitted to a diverse audience, including, among others, school administrators, parents, local communities, and the schools and colleges of education. In reaching the broader audience, the task force suggested a series of objectives:

- Acceptance of the concept of the outdoors as a classroom.
- Recognition of the value of environmental studies to the development of mathematics and language skills and in career development.
- Awareness of the multi- and interdisciplinary nature of outdoor/environmental programs.
- Awareness that such programs include both natural history and ecology.
- Attitudinal changes (described as a process involving three concentric circles – "love of self" to "human relations" to "relations with the environment.")
- Encouraging community involvement.

The objectives in reaching the narrower audience – teachers – were more specific:

- Overcoming fears of new subject matter.
- Overcoming insecurities posed by unfamiliar teaching situations.
- Developing familiarity with the action-oriented or "hands-on" approach to teaching.
- Recognition of the common denominators in human and ecological problems.

The task force did not delve into the specifics of training-course content but concluded that course structure would vary greatly, from one-shot lectures to traditional college courses and even to resident programs on a college campus. In-school training might include faculty conferences, demonstrations, and team teaching programs. And some training might take place outside the context of courses. Teachers who take the classes to a camping facility, for example, might be offered academic credit for the experience.

As to who would provide the training, the task force identified a wide range of possibilities, ranging from the obvious, like college faculties, to a broad collection of public and private agencies and institutions, some in a position to conduct programs and others in a position to sponsor them. (Many if not most of the agencies represented at the conference would fall into one or both of these categories.) The task force also suggested the use of graduate students to conduct in-school courses and the establishment of community centers for training purposes.

Towards the close of its deliberations, the task force identified but purposely left unresolved a series of thought-provoking problems and questions about the training effort. Among them was the problem of persuading teachers to enroll in training programs. What incentives could be offered? Should training take place on school time or on the teacher's own time?

Similarly, how are instructors to be recruited and paid? How are materials acquired and paid for? How can course availability be made known to teachers? Do the courses offered match teacher needs? How do we measure what teachers need and who makes the decisions? Can effective feedback systems be devised? And does a given course decrease teacher dependence on outside resources?

On the other hand, the task force came down with hard decisions on two critical questions. Certification of outdoor/environmental education teachers was ruled out on grounds it would tend to narrow the teachers'

concept of the field and to produce "false expertise" and "false experts." On the other hand, the task force was firm in calling for mandatory requirements in outdoor/environmental studies for undergraduate teacher-trainees. But it could not bring itself to call for mandatory in-service training for existing school staffs. "It is our sense as a committee," they reported, "that we first should exhaust every possible voluntary measure."

Facilities

The scope of possible programs in outdoor/environmental education was perhaps best illustrated by the work of the facilites task force, which accorded the broadest possible interpretation to the term "facilities" in pursuing its deliberations.

The task force's findings might well be translated into a diagram consisting of four concentric circles. Innermost of them would be the schoolhouse itself, with its potential for the study of such urban systems as energy use, water supply, waste disposal, and traffic patterns, as well as the potential for conversion of existing classroom and/or laboratory space to house courses, mini-courses, or special programs and exhibits for environmental studies. And, the task force suggested, schoolyards might be utilized as "campsites" with school showers, toilets, and locker rooms left open for supervised use by overnight campers.

Second of the circles would encompass the immediate community and open up almost endless possibilities for outdoor/environmental activities. Local parks might be used to introduce pupils to camping skills. The streets offer a laboratory for the study of traffic, transportation, and air and noise pollution. The supermarkets could be a resource for the study of food chains and waste disposal. Local institutions – churches, the Y's, youth clubs – might offer both facilities and cooperation with school programs. The list could go on but, the task force suggested, the important thing is to recognize that opportunities in the community are plentiful and their full extent should be identified by a careful survey.

Circle three would include the entire city, its parks and open spaces, its waterfront, its institutions, its transportation and traffic systems, and its business community. Again, the possibilities are seemingly endless: field trips to such facilities as the new Gateway National Recreation Area, energy studies at a Consolidated Edison power plant, briefings on the fuel crisis at an oil company headquarters, visits to science-related museums, etc.

Finally, the fourth circle would include the metropolitan region – areas within reasonable travel distance in terms of both time and expense. Here, the objective will be to identify state and federal park facilities suitable for day trips and private or institutional camps, preferably with winterized facilities, that can accommodate classes and their teachers on week-long camping experiences.

While local districts can conduct facilities surveys in individual schools and in the immediate community, they probably will not be equipped to identify all the opportunities open to them either citywide or in the surrounding region. Here, like the other task forces, the facilities group felt the need for inter-agency cooperation and some sort of clearinghouse or "hot line" operation to collect and disseminate information.

If there was a recurrent theme to the task force's deliberations, it was that, in considering facilities for outdoor/environmental programs, *"you have to make it easy."* Put another way, if programs are to be attractive and feasible, ease of access is critical. Trans-

portation must be readily available. Facilities must be adaptable to use by children and usable by *all* children, including the handicapped. This means that there must be no architectural barriers to prevent use by children in wheelchairs or on crutches. In outdoor or camp situations, the nature of the terrain and availability of suitable paths or ramps must be taken into account.

The transportation question proved to be a key task force concern and was the focus of two major recommendations. First was a call for an in-depth computer study, employing city-owned equipment, to determine optimum transportation systems to move the maximum possible number of city pupils to outdoor/environmental facilities in both the city and the region. The study would include the full range of transportation systems – rail, bus, and waterborne (air was not mentioned).

To pay for transportation services, *waterborne or not,* the task force recommended that attempts be made to secure private-sector financing. It suggested, for example, that Consolidated Edison could underwrite transportation costs for a field trip to one of its power plants.

The task force at the same time considered what might be called "reverse transportation" – systems by which exhibits, laboratories, or workshop materials related to outdoor/environmental programs could be transported to the children, in their schools or neighborhoods. The use of boats (for areas near the water), van or mobile home-type vehicles, and trailers was recommended for this purpose. Further, the task force suggested that duplication of such equipment as camping gear and canoes could be reduced through the use of portable units (trailers) to move them from facility to facility as needs dictated.

Funding

Money, unquestionably the thorniest problem tackled at the Mohonk Conference, was the unenviable assignment for task force four. It had to face a number of stark realities: the city and its school system were in a fiscal crisis (which since has worsened). Outdoor/environmental programs tended to

cost more than traditional in-school programs. They were not generally regarded as essential either by the educational and municipal establishment or by the general public. And some programs, particularly school camping, probably were regarded by many as outright frills.

Indeed, only one school camping program, in Manhattan's Community School District 2, was operating with tax levy funding.

The task force opened its deliberations with an exploration of possible sources of outside support – foundations, federal grants, etc. But, one member reminded the group, reliance on outside grants can be a "cop-out." Grants generally are provided for experimental purposes and not for continuing programs. If an experimental program is to survive, it eventually must secure continuing funding from the public purse.

The problem, then, was to find ways to develop outdoor/environmental programs in the city that would be visible enough and successful enough to gain public and institutional acceptance, a reordering of priorities, and, despite the fiscal squeeze, tax-levy funding. Politically and practically speaking, the task appeared to be an impossible one.

But the picture brightened perceptibly when the task force was joined at its second session by Dr. Jack Hershey, director of environmental programs for the University City Science Center of Philadelphia, a consortium of northeastern colleges and universities. Hershey, who has wide experience in raising federal funds for educational programs, proceeded to map a strategy for the task force, one that presumably would realize the ultimate goal of regular school budget support for continuing programs in outdoor/environmental education.

Hershey's strategy was divided into three broad phases – "awareness", "transition", and "operational." In the awareness phase he called first for an intensive public relations effort ("let them know we're alive") designed to make the public aware of the existence and educational value of outdoor/environmental

programs. Simultaneously, he urged, a "network", including the Board of Education, the Board of Higher Education, and all interested public and private agencies be organized. The network, he suggested, collectively would enjoy far more political clout than individual agencies, school districts, or programs.

Assuming that outside funding would be required during the awareness and transitional phases, Hershey urged an inventory be made of the dollar needs of the various programs Then, he said, possible funding agencies should be identified and a careful inventory made of *agency* needs. All funding agencies, he pointed out, have specific goals or objectives for the dollars at their disposal and are far more likely to respond favorably to proposals that tally with those "needs." Accordingly, once both program needs and agency needs are known, the next step is to match them up, then prepare proposals for the appropriate agencies.

But here, Hershey issued a hard-nosed piece of advice: get professionals to do the grant writing. He noted, for example, that 50 percent of federal grants for environmental education had political implications behind them. "Grant writing by novices will not produce outdoor education in New York."

Once proposals are submitted, Hershey said, it takes 90 to 120 days to receive the money, after which the programs can get under way. Enter the "transitional" phase. Here, Hershey advised, the effort will be to "get the facts" about the operation of the programs and their effectiveness and to "learn the trends" in the outdoor/environmental field. And, most important, "build a track record" that will demonstrate the viability and educational value of the programs. Meanwhile, he added, the public relations effort should continue, making that track record visible to the public and officialdom alike.

The final, "operational" phase involves the institutionalization of the programs. In other words, the programs no longer will be regarded as experimental and will enjoy continued funding under regular board of education budget lines. But, Hershey suggested, this

is not a time to relax. Every effort must be made to insure that programs are flexible enough to meet changing needs, that the programs continue to be "quality operations" and that, therefore, they will continue to deserve and receive public funding.

Inter-Agency and Community Based Programs

Of the six task forces, that on inter-agency and community-based programs came down hardest on the need for a clearinghouse or index of outdoor/environmental programs. At present, the task force pointed out, there is no central source where teachers and administrators can obtain complete, accurate, and up-to-date information about available out-of-school programs and facilities.

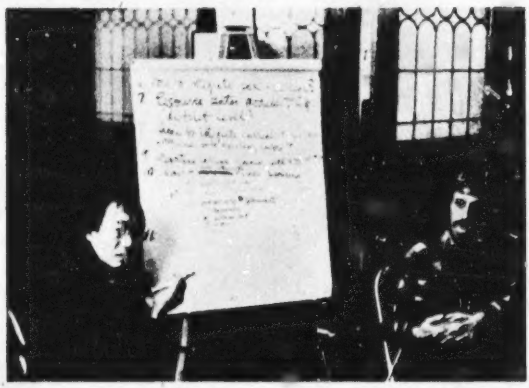
"There is little way the teacher can judge in advance whether existing programs will be suitable for his or her class," the task force reported. "At the same time, while city institutions and agencies are spending large sums on school programs, many now have no way to determine how well these programs are achieving their objectives."

"We need to know more accurately what school populations they are serving or failing to serve. We need to know better how well their programs are serving children. We also need a better measure of programs which are needed but do not exist."

The proposed clearinghouse, the task force said, would address itself to those concerns. Specifically, the clearinghouse would collect, classify, assess, and disseminate information on inter-agency and community-based programs in outdoor/environmental education. It would operate as an independently administered, quasi-governmental and non-profit organization that would work cooperatively with the Board of Education, the Board of Higher Education, the state Board of Regents, and other educational institutions.

The task force envisioned five basic functions for the proposed clearinghouse:

– Research, including an inventory of inter-agency programs and facilities, classification, and indexing.



- Communications between institutions and the clearinghouse and between the clearinghouse and the schools; development of a dissemination system.
- Production, covering a telephone information service, periodic information guides, news items in existing publications, and development of a list of potential clients (user schools and school districts).
- Evaluation, including self-evaluation of its own operations and assistance to institutions and schools in the assessment of their programs.
- Coordination between agencies and institutions to avoid unnecessary overlap and duplication of both programs and facilities; encourage the development of new cooperative programs to fill unmet needs.

As an indication of the thorough and painstaking work of this and other task forces, the inter-agency group issued a detailed, twelve-point "sequence of development" for its proposed clearinghouse.

As a first step, it called for creation of a permanent advisory group, including representatives of each of the conference task forces as well as other individuals with a contribution to make. Working relationships then would be established with the Board of Education, Board of Higher Education, community school districts, and other agencies and institutions and an effort made to involve them in the planning process.

Planning completed, detailed proposals for the establishment of the clearinghouse would be prepared and submitted to the appropriate funding agency(ies). Once the funds were in hand, a staff would be hired and operations begun.

Working under the direction of the advisory group, the staff would inventory programs and facilities, establish communications with existing programs and involved schools, and classify and index the resulting data. Later, evaluation procedures would be established, a public relations program organized, the first information material issued, and the communications network, including the telephone service and publication of periodic guides, put in place.

As the task force envisions it, the clearinghouse also would employ workshops and other techniques to encourage the development of community-level inventories, the development of innovative programs to handle unmet needs, and promote inter-agency coordination. And, finally, it would conduct continuous programs of research and evaluation.

Beyond its clearinghouse proposal, the inter-agency task force called for establishment of a separate "permanent advisory council on environmental education" built around a nucleus of Mohonk Conference participants and other appropriate personnel. The new council, the task force suggested, would "promote multi-disciplinary outdoor/environmental education, set standards, encourage necessary research, schedule workshops and conferences, and secure public support for these programs."

Administration

Perhaps because it is the area where administrative problems seem most difficult, the task force on administration of school camping and outdoor programs tended to concentrate on the former in both its deliberations and recommendations.

To be sure, there was recognition that outdoor/environmental programs of all types will require new and improved administrative arrangements at all levels of the educational

system and in involved agencies and institutions. Administrative changes would be needed at the central school board headquarters, at the community school district level, and from the principal to the teacher level at individual schools. And the same could be said for the management of private and institutionally related camps, and the whole range of public and private agencies and institutions involved in outdoor/environmental programs.

But the emphasis on camps pervaded the task force deliberations. Like the other groups, it saw teacher fears and resistance as an obstacle. But, going beyond other group recommendations, it saw teacher orientation programs *at camp sites* as a promising solution, along with such measures as workshops, required outdoor studies in teacher preparation programs, and the provision of adequate teacher guides, curriculum materials, and suggested activities. The task force urged that administrators participate in the camp-site orientation programs and that efforts be made to secure parent involvement as well.

To the clearinghouse proposals of the other task forces, the administration group added the request that an inclusive directory of approved and accredited camps be established, providing information on residential and educational facilities, program possibilities, available services and staff, and whether winterized facilities are available.

The task force report offered an extensive list of proposals for camp administration, first and most important of them a requirement that health and safety standards be met. The camp administrator, the task force said, must understand the needs of the schools in conducting a camping program and prepare himself and the camp facilities and staff to meet those needs (which clearly will differ greatly from those of a summer camp program).

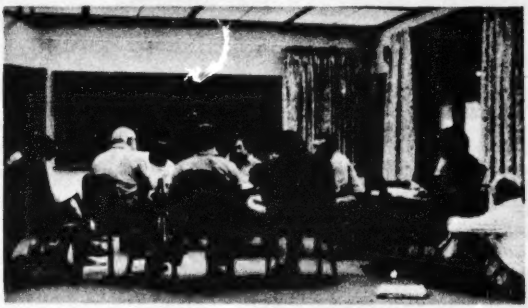
This, the task force said, will require establishment of a dialogue and a working relationship with each school served by the camp so that school programs are clearly understood by camp personnel and camp programs and

facilities are tailored accordingly and so that the schools are fully aware of the camp's potential to accommodate their programs.

Camp personnel – nurse, naturalist, counselor, cook – must be trained to handle and be receptive to the programs and clientele involved in school camping. And it may be necessary to provide new facilities – a wildlife refuge, nature trails, museum – to accommodate educational needs.

At the school level, the task force suggested that it was the principal's responsibility to see to it that teachers participating in school camping programs were committed to the principle, were adequately trained, and fully involved in the program. It suggested that, again at the school level, joint training programs for teachers and camp staffs be organized. (This, in addition to the sort of pre- and in-service training programs called for by the appropriate Mohonk task force.) And it recommended that the school administration, working with whatever central clearinghouse may be established, provide the necessary materials and supervision for program development.

The task force pointed to the fact that outside agencies, both public and private, can be of assistance in school camping programs as well as in other outdoor/environmental activities. And, like other task forces, it stresssed the need to obtain better information on the nature and possible extent of that assistance. Particular interest was shown in such outside assistance as workshop speakers, the loan of camp facilities, funds for transportation to camp, and personnel to assist in camp programs.



The administration group came up with its own wrinkle on the clearinghouse concept. It called for establishment of an Office of Outdoor Education to provide listings of accredited camp facilities, training standards for both school and camp personnel, and an inventory of outside agencies in a position to assist in outdoor programs. In addition, it would operate training programs, serve as a clearinghouse of information, and offer motivation to administrators, school staffs, and communites interested in establishing school programs.

The new office initially would be established in and funded through the existing Bureau of Health and Physical Education. But the task force urged that, eventually, the Office of Outdoor Education become an independent unit within the Board of Education and charged with the responsibility for "coordinating interdisciplinary studies as taught in the outdoors."

This report printed on recyled paper.

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